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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR JUNE 01, 2006

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for June 01, 2006.

Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

HURRIYET ONLINE: The second hearing of the Semdinli case started at Van's Third Heavy Penalty Court today at 11.30 am (see press summary 05/31). The defendants have been brought to the courtroom under intense security measures and in high secrecy. Defendants Ali Kaya and Ozcan Ildeniz have been brought from the Van Military Jail and PKK defector Veysel Ates has been brought from Bitlis Jail. Mehmet Elkatmis, Turkish Parliament's Human Rights Commission Chairperson; Mesut Deger, Van deputy from CHP and deputy chairman of Turkish Parliament's Commission for Probing Semdinli Case; Mehmet Kartal, Van deputy from CHP; Chris Bradley, Political Affairs Officer at the British Embassy in Ankara, came to Van to watch the trial.

CUMHURIYET / ZAMAN / RADIKAL / YENI SAFAK: Two soldiers and three temporary village guards died in a clash between security forces and terrorists in the area of the Kato Mountain in Sirnak. Five village guards were wounded. Security forces intensified their military operations in the area around the Gabar and Cudi Mountains. Meanwhile, family of one of two soldiers, who died in a clash in Sirnak (see press summary 05/31), sang Kurdish dirges during the funeral of their son in Mersin.

OZGUR GUNDEM: HPG (People's Forces of Defense) (read PKK) press center claimed that 17 soldiers have died and 10 soldiers have been wounded in the last five days.

CUMHURIYET / OZGUR GUNDEM / YENI SAFAK: Another lawsuit has been instituted against Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir (and nine municipality employees) by the Diyarbakir Prosecutor's Office for causing the municipality to incur a financial damage worth 967,000 YTL during a public tender in which the cheapest bid was overturned and contract was awarded to another company.

ZAMAN / BOLGE / EKSPRES / SABAH (GUNEY): General Assembly of Turkish Union of Municipalities, presided over by Adana Mayor Aytac Durak, was held in Ankara. Durak said that they resolved disputes and reached an agreement with the Ankara Mayor Melih Gokcek over the list of candidates that will run for membership of the sub-committee.

OZGUR GUNDEM: The daily claimed that Ministry Of Interior refused application of Osman Baydemir to the ministry to take part in the delegation that will attend European Council's Regional and Local Administrations Congress (see press summary 05/31). The Norwegian chairman of the congress reportedly said

that they did not find the grounds conveyed by the interior ministry satisfactory about the regional representative from the southeastern region. The congress administration will send two reporters (one from Sweden, one from Switzerland) to get first-hand information about local and regional democracy issues in Turkey.

OZGUR GUNDEM: DTP (Democratic Society Party) co-chairpersons, who are currently in northern Iraq (see press summaries 05/30 and 31), met with Federal Kurdistan Regional President Massoud Barzani and parliamentary spokesperson Adnan Mufti. Barzani said the dialogue among the Kurds should be fostered for resolving of the Kurdish issue.

OZGUR GUNDEM: The daily claims that interesting developments have taken place concerning the case of Ferhat Tepe, a journalist of daily Ozgur Gundem newspaper, whose reported tortured dead body was found nearby a lake in Elazig allegedly after he was taken onto custody in 1993 and whose case has been filed with the European Court in 2000. A witness of the case, who announced in 1993 to the public through a letter that Tepe was heavily tortured at the anti-terror branch in August 1993, recently announced that he now regretted being bribed by Ministry of Interior officials in 2000 to lie to European Court jurors that he did not witness any torturing back in 1993.

OZGUR GUNDEM: The indictment prepared by the Osmaniye Security Directorate against people because of alleged illegal concerns about this year's Newruz celebrations referred to mythological Newruz figures "Brutal Dehaq" and "Ironsmith Kawa", which included Kurdish letters, as "Brutal Dehap" and "Ironsmith Kova" respectively. (Note: DEHAP is a Kurdish political party which preceded DTP and which was abolished last year. Kova means "bucket" in Turkish which does not have any contextual relationship with the mythological character. End Note.)

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CUMHURIYET / OZGUR GUNDEM: When the muftiluk installed megaphones for calls for prayer in Kahramanmaraş's Nurhak district, which is mostly populated by Alevis, members of the Alevi community reacted, and the megaphones were removed. Currently, there is one mosque and two cemevi (Alevi worship centres) in the district, reported the papers.

CUMHURIYET / OZGUR GUNDEM: Syrians, who left their villages in Mardin's Midyat district and went abroad years ago, have recently been returning to their villages.

HURRIYET (CUKUROVA): A school in a village of Mardin's Kiziltepe district has been renovated by joint efforts of the Mardin Governor's Office and 7th Army Corps Command.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Because of consanguinal and intra-community marriages taking place in Diyarbakir's Dokmetas village, many children have been suffering from thalassemia or mental disorders.

ZAMAN / YENI SAFAK: A 23-year-old nurse of a private hospital committed suicide in Batman, a city where suicidal tendencies have been reported as increasing among women in most of the newspapers nowadays.

SABAH (GUNEY): Hatay police seized 1350 grams of hashish, 418 bottles of smuggled whiskey, and 6370 packets of cigarettes in Hatay and detained 4 people in connection with that smuggling and organized crime.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Members of BTS (United Transportation Trade Union) Adana chapter conducted a sit-in protest for "exiling" of the Train Station Chief of Mersin to another post.

SABAH (GUNEY): Veli Serin, Mayor (CHP) of Yenice in Mersin, who has attempted to punish Cag University by not collecting its garbage when the university administration rejected hiring a person as a cleaner at the request of Serin, reportedly

attempted this time to collect all copies of Sabah Guney newspaper from shelves, for reporting on Serin's activities.

BOLGE: The daily reports that 55 people who have been loyal to and worked for CHP to date in Adana decided to become a member of MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) in Adana. Yilmaz Tankut, MHP Adana chairperson, who talked at the ceremony held for new recruits, criticized the government and said that AKP has been acquiescent in the face of imperialists who turned the country into a hell of minorities in order to exploit the country.

CUMHURIYET: Parents reacted upon learning that a book on interpretation of the Koran was sold to the students during the religion class of a high school in Adana on the day that marks the birth of the Prophet Mohammed. The school administration and the provincial education directorate was not knowledgeable about the selling of the book.

CUMHURIYET: A manuscript in the form of a eulogy, dating back to 1884, which was presented to Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II by a clergy of a theological school for sultan's contributions for the school's construction, has been found during the excavation studies for the ongoing restoration project (of the Armenian Christian church) on Van's Akdamar Island.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

SABAH (GUNEY): A 20-person delegation from Mersin's Chamber of Commerce and Industry returned from a business trip to Kazakhstan.

12. SABAH (GUNEY): Chairperson of the Gaziantep Chamber of Industry said that foreign businessmen, who will come to Gaziantep to attend June 7-11 International Iraq Fair, will benefit from exemption from visa fees when entering Turkey for a period of fifteen days during the fair.
REID